

RECENT DISCOVERY OF TWO MORE KHAROṢṬHĪ INSCRIPTIONS FROM GANDHARA

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In recent years dozens of inscriptions have been discovered in the region of Gandhāra and are still turning up in increasing number. These epigraphical records are mostly coming through antique dealers, private collectors or through the survey being conducted regularly by the principal author. They are either painted or engraved on materials of various kinds and have different contents. Most of these epigraphs are written in Kharoṣṭhī characters.

Recently two inscriptions written in Kharoṣṭhī were brought to the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, for analysis. One of these inscriptions (Figs. 1a, 1b) is supposed to have been discovered in the district of Dir and the other (Fig.2) was discovered near Mardan, in ancient Gandhāra.

Inscription No. 1 (Fig.1)

The present inscription is lying in a private collection. The exact locality from where the inscription was brought to the antiquity dealer is not known, but it is presumed that it has been found in the valley of Panjkora, Dir¹. The inscription is painted in black on gray in a single line on the shoulder of a pitcher with a height of 32 cm.

The presence of a very strange sign, similar to a floral design, in the middle of the inscription is not clear to me. Does this sign represent a punctuation mark? If it is the case, then we should start the reading from *gadaputrasa*. But in this case, the phraseology will not be correct. Normally the donor name and the purpose for which the gift is made are shown at the end of the text. There is space for at least three letters between the words *caacaśami* and *sarvastvane*. This space makes me easy to imagine that the inscription starts from the word *caacaśami* and ends with *sarvastvane*.

The reading of the inscription does not create any problem except for the few letters when they are very faint.

Transliteration:

caacaśami a+satasami acaryena sarvastivadina parigrahami dredhodasa gadaputrasa danamue matra puyae sarvasatvane

Translation:

In the (village of) Caacaśa, in A+satasā, in the acceptance of the Sarvāstivāda teachers, gift by Dredhodasa, son of Gada, (with this gift) mother is honored, all the human beings (are honored).

Because of the faint nature of the first two words, its reading is difficult and the proposed transliteration is not certain. The first word seems to be a locality name, which is difficult to identify. Then comes the three words, *acaryena sarvastivadina parigrahami* -, very common in the Buddhist inscriptions from Gandhāra. The gift has been made in honor of the Sarvāstivāda sect teachers. This sect was a very famous sect of Buddhist school of thought in the region of Kashmir and Gandhāra.

An individual called Dreddhosa, the etymology of which is not clear, has done the gift. The Patronymic Gada seems to be for Ganda or Gandha. The word is used as proper name for several persons.

The writing is very cursive in form, particularly the shapes of the medial vowels. The vowel 'i' is marked by an elongated slanting stroke, e.g. in the word *sarvasivadina*. The medial 'u' shows a complete loop. In case of the word *danamue*, the letter 'mu' is shown in a very cursive manner showing the shape of the letter 'ha'. The medial 'e' is generally applied to the lower part of the vertical, e.g., in the word *danamue* where it is shown by a backward slache to the bottom of the vertical. In some cases a space is kept between the letter and the medial e, e.g., in word *gadredhu*. The letter 'na' shows angular head. The distinction between 'ta' and 'da' is difficult to make. The mouth of the letter 'sa' is completely opened. The prefix 'ra' shows a complete loop. Almost all the verticals show bends.

¹ Other inscriptions, recently discovered in the same area, are those written in Kharoṣṭhī (Nasim Khan, M. 2000. An Inscribed Relic-casket from Dir. *The Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. V, No. 1, March 1997. Peshawar) and Śāraḍa characters. The later one is to be published.

Inscription No. 2 (Fig.2)²

This inscription has been engraved on the edge of a round shaped schist stone. Half of the stone is missing and it seems that part of the inscription has disappeared with the missing part of the stone, which originally might be a *catra* (?). The remaining part of the inscription can be read and translated as follows:

Transliteration:

///magiatśa imi thubami pra[tiṣṭha]ṇahava +///

Translation:

///magiatśa, in this *stūpa* established, ++ ṇahava +///

It seems that one third of the *catra* is missing and there is no doubt that the inscription was engraved throughout the margin of the *catra*. It is difficult to reconstruct the missing part of the inscription but it seem that the theme of the inscription was probably the establishment of the relics of the Buddha in the *stūpa*, the name of which is mentioned in the present part of the inscription. It is also possible that the missing part of the inscription could contain the name and the patronymic of the donor as well as the mention of the persons, etc, in honor of whom the donation was made.

In the central part of the slab, three lines of inscription have been engraved. The patina shows that these signs seem to be the imitation of Kharoṣṭhī *akṣāras*, and are very recently engraved. There is nothing to say about the contents of this fake inscription.

Date:

Even though there is no mention of any date in both the inscriptions, they can be approximately assigned to a certain period on the basis of the palaeography. In both the inscriptions, e.g., the application of the medial ‘e’ to the lower part of the vertical, the shape of the medial ‘u’ which is a complete loop, and the elongated medial ‘i’, are characteristic features of the later Kuṣāṇa period. The same is the case with the bends in the verticals, which is another characteristic of the later Kuṣāṇa type of Kharoṣṭhī. The complete open mouth of ‘sa’ is very typical to the later phase of the Kharoṣṭhī script before the Brāhmi in Gandhāra has replaced it. The over all cursive form of both the inscriptions suggests a late date, probably 3rd century A.D

² We are very thankful to Mr. Makin Khan, Assistant Director of Archaeology, Sub-Regional Office Quetta, who brought to me the inscription for analysis.



Fig.1a: Kharoṣṭhī inscription from Dir - Gandhāra.

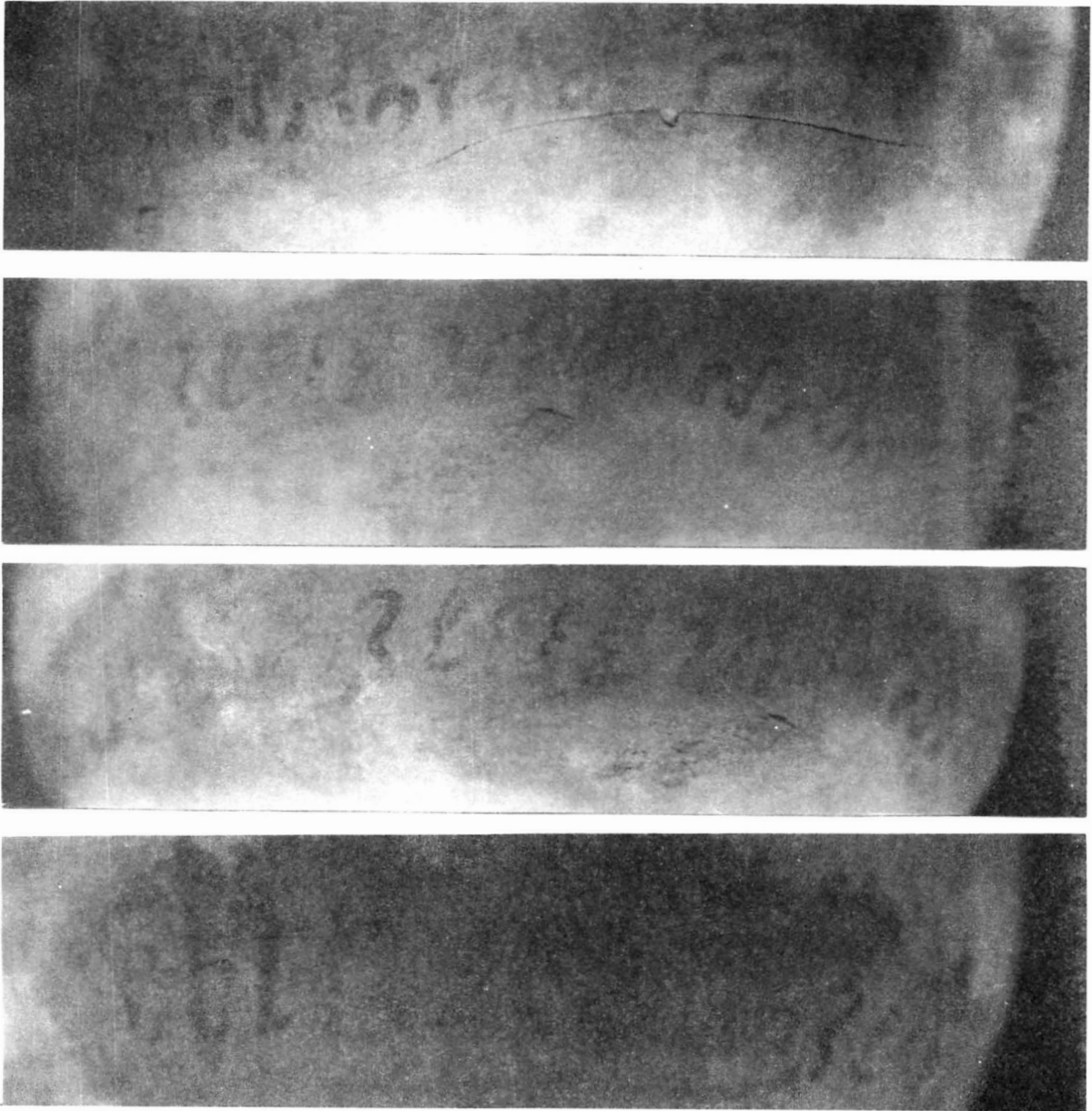


Fig.1b: Kharoṣṭhī inscription from Dir - Gandhāra.

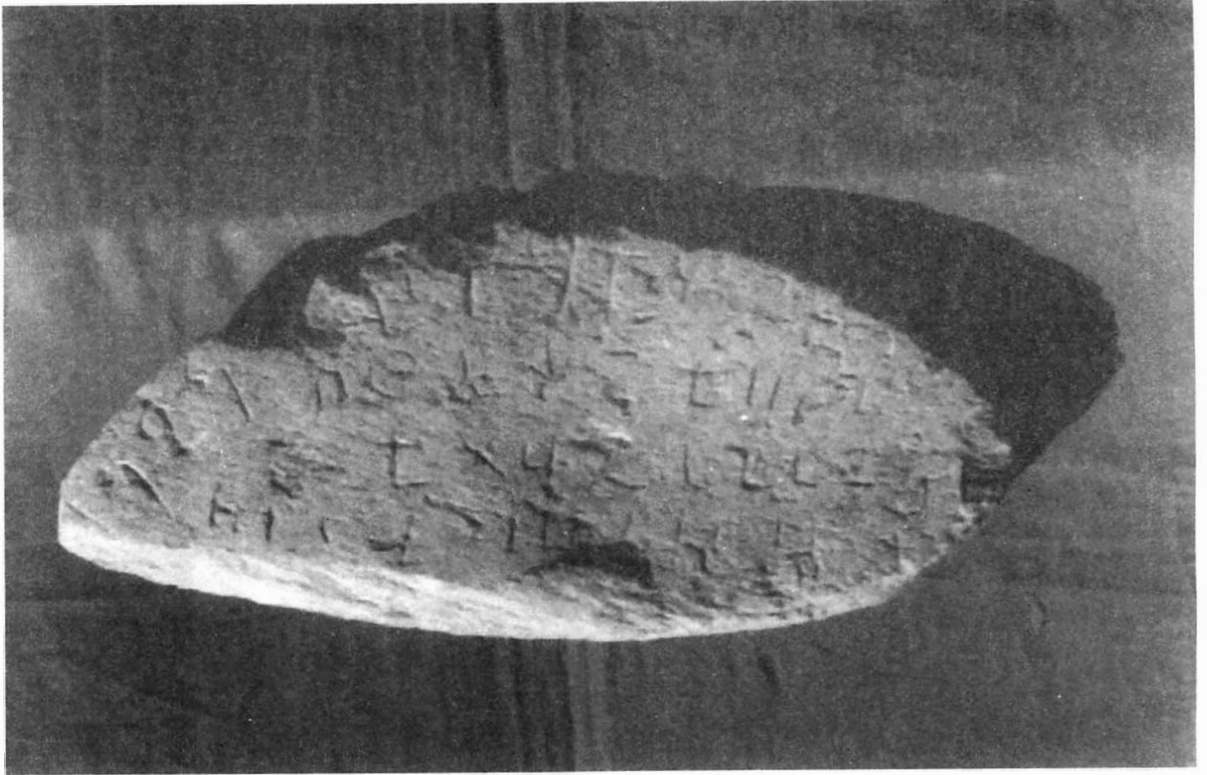


Fig. 2: Kharoṣṭhī inscription from Mardan - Gandhāra.